Informer: LMP-S1 **Spanish**
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CH: So you don't want to talk about how [9-11] has affected you?

HC: No, because it has nothing to do with or do you think it does?

CH: I think so because it has to do with the botánica. He wants you to reassure me whether it's okay to ask about the effects of September 11 on the business. He thinks it doesn't have anything to do with the study, but um, if you reassure me that it does—

MOJ: In that we want to know when people come to him and for what things. If they're not coming, what are they doing? Why are they not coming and what are they doing when they're not getting spells from him or healing from him.

CH: Right.

HC: What's he saying?

CH: He says that it is important to know how September 11 has affected you because before the event you had a certain clientele and—

HC: There were lines of people, now people are not coming.

CH: And things have changed.

HC: Changed greatly, hard change. People want things but they have no money. They have nothing, nothing; people have no money. People are sick in the head right now. If it was up to me there would be no war. War will kill innocent people and they are not going to fix anything. The government will waste a lot of money, millions, billions of billions of billions. They will waste a lot of money and will not amount to anything; they will not capture that man. That man, I think, is the antichrist.

CH: He is the antichrist.

HC: Yes. He will not be captured. And if they get him things will be hard. There will be more problems. The least that can be done is for people to protect here; to protect the people that are here. They must care for the city and not let anything like that happen. But in that time I was selling $2, 200. Even that day, the 11th, I still, still sold $700 dollars. But that day, which was a Tuesday, I usually sell $2,000, but that day I only sold $700, but barely.

CH: Because of what happened?

HC: And the next day I did not sell anything. The next day I sold $200 then it went down to $100 and there are store taxes to pay, taxes for the workers, the locale must be paid, water has to be paid, light, the phone has to be paid. Everything has to be paid! I have license to work.

CH: You have to pay your house, and personal things.

HC: Pay my house, cars, my son's school, everything! Now I can't. I think if things continue like this I'll have to leave.

CH: Back to Guatemala or what?

HC: No, here I will not remain, I'll go back to Guatemala. Because there I don't pay rent or pay for anything. I'll stay in, at least a tin shack (gallera), but here I pay too much money. Right now they have removed my front sign. No, no, right now everything is like with doors closed (meaning that all opportunity is closed). At these hours I have had many people here and now I have nobody. It's not because I don't know anything, but what happens is that people don't have money to come and spend; People, nobody, right now, has money to come and spend.

CH: Is it that people have no money or are they afraid?

HC: They have no money. Look, if you made, let's say, $500 a week and you live a life where you have to pay for your house, rent and pay all of that. It's not enough! It's not enough to pay for, let's say, five children. $500 is not enough; people do not make $500, they make $200. Then, suppose I make $500 a week, for me that is not enough! Look, right now I have a year that has been ugly like this. I leave the country 5-6 times a year, but haven't left this year. If I leave I'll lose my house or my cars. But now things are ruined completely; completely ruined. And as far as I'm concerned I hope they not go and massacre people. Don't they see how poor people are in that country, Axulutan is it?

CH: Pakistan?

HC: No, no there's another

CH: Afghanistan?

HC: Afghanistan. People there are very poor. People there are very humble.

CH: Does the idea of them suffering bother you?

HC: Yes. They should take that country and make it right, like here. They must remove the masks and all of those ideas. And any man who is setting forth those ideas should be incarcerated. They need to install a government that is free. I think that women there don't even change their clothes.

CH: I think they have to be well covered. It depends on their religion.

HC: Religion, smeligion! They need to try. There they live as if they were 50 years behind this country. There they barely have, in fact, I think they don't even have lights. That country looks like just rocks. They have finished that country. You see that on television. And now the United States will go and finish them off. How many people will die who have nothing to do with any of that? I feel real sorry for the women, the poor women. What's best is that the country take care of itself, that it protect itself, that it have nothing, that it take care of cleaning the country, that people protect themselves and that they have their jobs and that not just anyone get blamed for things. They are (meaning govt. officials) blaming almost anyone. If I did something, I did something. I can't be more, I can't be ten [people]. But right now they are picking up who knows how many millions. Or if you did it, then you did it and maybe five others were with you, but it could not be the whole city. No.

CH: So, you fell ill?

HC: I'm not well, I'm not well. I've got bad nerves, headaches, bad character. But, what am I to do? Here in this building the owner will not ever forgive me for not paying $1500 in rent. He'll never forgive me. The water company will never forgive me, the water company will just never forgive me. The light [dept] will forgive me less, the phone [co] even less, the pay for my house even less, my car if I am late paying one month they will repossess it and my car costs a lot, like 6,000 dollars. I almost finishing payments [on the car] but with set backs such as the ones I'm having right now they'll take everything. If things continue like this I will lose everything.

CH: So you are very—

HC: --very bad because I have been unable to, I don't know. I can't fill my store, I can't fill my store. Nobody whom you owe will forgive you for not paying, especially home owners, business and locale owners. The companies who you owe do not forgive you for anything, they just keep collecting and collecting and if there are no clients with what am I going to pay? A bunch of people visit me to collect, but if I have nothing what will I do? Many people come to collect everything that I owe them but I don't have money right now so I ask them to wait and see how I will do, but they don't wait they threaten me with bad things! They treat you bad and that—

CH: It bothers

HC: it makes you sick.

CH: yes.

HC: It's bad, very bad, I feel very bad. I hope nothing else happens because I just don't know what will happen.

CH: And do your people, your clients, feel like you do?

HC: Worse, I think. They are worse because they are living it because they don't have a business and I at least know how to do one thing or another and so on, but they are worse off because there are people who only make $150 a week.

CH: They have less money.

HC: If in the past you could go out to eat you can't now because if they were paying you $150 they will now give you $75 because all bosses are removing jobs. So, the only people who probably live well are the millionaires. They are the ones who demand war and all that. But the truth is we can't do much.

CH: Are there illnesses that are arising due to what happened?

HC: Nerves, nerves. There are many people who are committing suicide possibly. Let's say you have your house and due to the bad luck that occurred there you cannot pay your house, your husband will not be calm and if in the past he did not fight with you he will now because of the nerves from you asking him for money that he does not have. Your kids will ask for money and if you do not have money due to lack of work? So, a lot of things will happen now, poor folk are sick, very sick. There's no money. People are afraid and many are leaving. Leaving one's home doesn't matter, everyone is leaving this place.

CH: And you are thinking of leaving as well?

HC: I'll leave. If things continue this way I'll leave.

CH: With your kids and all?

HC: Yes, what else would we stay here for? No, no, everything here costs, even walking and in my country it's not. There we live in what's ours even if it's a small place like this and no one tells us anything. Here if you don't pay they put you in jail, they threaten you and they always (inaudible). Look, right now they don't let me put a sign up on my business, they don't let me advertise anywhere and I am paying $2200 a year in taxes. Yet they don't let me advertise. So, what am I to do? I have no money for television advertisement because if I did things would be different and it costs a lot! Magazines are expensive, they are not cheap! Nothing is possible. And there is a lot, a lot, a lot.

CH: Things are difficult aren't they?

HC: It's bad and if things continue all will end because nobody is leaving the country, look at the airline companies.

CH: And what does san Simon say? Has he visited you or anything?

HC: Yes, he says all will be well, if God permits, but I am not well because if I don't work payments cease to be made.

CH: Is there anything you can do?

HC: Right now there is nothing that can be done, even if you are a major sorcerer.

CH: Nothing can be done. You can only wait for war.

HC: Wait. Hopefully nothing will happen but who knows. But they say that it's already happening. That they are already doing that.

CH: The war? Yes.

HC: It started, they say. They have fifteen days into it. They say that it started five days after it all happened, but they don't want to confirm.

CH: Ay, there is much that will happen, it's true.

HC: Many things.

MOJ: So, by way of summary what are some of the—

CH: He's very concerned because he says a lot of people are experiencing worries right now. People are nervous and depressed. He's not making the money he used to be.

HC: Everyone has headaches; their bodies ache. We'll end up crazy! I think sometimes I want to —the day that that happened (inaudible) I was like crazy or something like that.

CH: You got very depressed?

HC: I am not from here, but I have to protect this place because this country feeds me. This is the only place that feeds us all.

CH: The event bothered you a lot.

HC: What that man did was very bad, very, very bad.

CH: Yeah, he says he was extremely affected by what occurred on September 11 because this isn't his country, but this is where he eats, this is where he, this is the country that feeds him, he says. So, it's very—he says a lot of people are experiencing a lot of depression, nerve problems, headaches, body aches. People don't have money, they're either getting laid off or things like that and he says if things don't get better he might just have to leave and pack up and go back to Guatemala.

MOJ: And the reason that people don't come to him even though they have these—
CH: --ailments—

MOJ: --feelings is that they—

CH: --no money—

MOJ: --don't have the money.

CH: Yeah. He says—

HC: People don't have money. People have no money.

CH: If his business has gone down from $2000 a day, and you know, how has it affected other people, you know, the September 11 event is what he's saying. Some people only make $200 a week or $100 a week and so if their pay becomes decreased for some reason, maybe lay-offs and that sort of thing, then he's got less clientele; people are not gonna wanna come in.

MOJ: Well, we hope for something better than that.

CH: Yeah, he says San Simon tells him that it's gonna be okay, but he's still concerned.

HC: Yes, but right now they are discriminating everything, they even find fault in Latinos and they have nothing to do with all that.

CH: Yeah, he says there's a lot of discrimination going on as well, even Latinos are being blamed for things and they had nothing to do with that.

HC: They have nothing to eat much less time forgoing to war (laughs)

CH: He says, "They don't even have any food to eat so why would they even have time for war?"

HC: Things are hard, we'll see what God says.

MOJ: Why the flowers and plants outside?

CH: The professor wants to know if there's significance with the flowers that are hanging there?

HC: No, they've just been washed.

CH: They've been washed? Oh, they just washed them, so they're drying them. What about the other San Simon, have you stored him?

HC: He's at the brotherhood (cofradía).

CH: The brotherhood.

HC: Yes.

CH: You're preparing him for—

HC: --for the party; they're cleaning him, fixing him.

CH: Nice. Do they change his clothes as well?

HC: No, he does not wear clothes only a cape.

CH: Oh, because he is the type that is already dressed such as this one, right?

HC: Yes.

CH: I would like to continue with the questions that we started with last time, in continuation with questions about yourself and we ended with your migration experience. Like for example what you did when you arrived, the type of work, and when you began living here and maybe I would like to talk a bit more about how long you worked your botánica in that other building and later about when you began working—

HC: It was on the corner.

CH: On the corner? But you had your own botánica?

HC: Yes, but I did not do everything when I came.

CH: No

HC: No, I would light my little candles and started that way because I do not know this country, I did not know this country. Now I feel like it's my country because I am here, but not before because I did not know and could not turn a candle on or anything. It wasn't until three years later that I began working in this again because I lived in that building.

CH: Yes, in the blue one.

HC: And, my friend was the manager and she gave me permission to work out of a room.

CH: So, it was out of a room that you began giving consultations?

HC: I gave consultation out of a room for six months.

CH: And after those six months?

HC: San Simon told me to move down to the lower floor to get them to rent me a locale there.

CH: So then you had a locale in that building?

HC: The address of my locale was 3501 [XXXX blvd].

CH: 3501.

HC: Tells son to watch the dogs and make sure they're not out in the sun.

CH: And how long did you last at that 3501 locale after you got it?

HC: Seven.

CH: Seven years, ooh! That's a long time.

HC: Seven years. Seven or five, I think, I don't recall.

CH: Okay, seven or five years. And after that time you came to this—

HC: I moved to this locale because the man there did not clean and the pipes where the urine passed dripped on top of the glass cases (vitrinas). I complained, and I used to pay 6 months in advance and he stole it from me.

CH: He stole it from you.

HC: He's Iranian.

CH: Oh, really. He did not want to refund you the money you paid in advance?

HC: No, because a lot of people would look for me and because he saw a lot of people each month he charged me more and I got out of there.

CH: So then, when you had that place you used to pay rent for that place?

HC: Always, I have always paid rent in the United States.

CH: And that's where you had your clientele?

HC: I've never been anywhere for free. Since I've been here I have always paid rent; every week, I paid rent.

CH: Did that locale have the same name?

HC: Yes, it was called the El Indio Samayac.

CH: El Indio Samayac, ah, okay.

HC: It has been called, Templo San Simon El Indio de Samayac since the first day I opened it; that's what's on the license.

CH: Templo San Simon El Indio de Samayac. And what's the name of this botánica?

HC: Templo San Simon de los Llanos El Indio de Samayac.

CH: Ah, de los Llanos el Indio Samayac, okay. And when you had the other botanica did you have a large clientele?

HC: I have always had a large clientele.

CH: Who were the majority of people who came to see you, Latinos or people of other races

HC: --ah, I don't work with the Chinese, not with the Chinese. No. I don't work with the Chinese or with any class that's--everyone is a witch/sorcerer, everyone, Jews and all class of people, whites and all, everyone believes in their witchcraft, but I don't work with Chinese or anything.

CH: Only with Latinos then?

HC: For the most part with people from El Salvador, Nicaragua, from Panama, Costa Rica, Puerto Rico, from Mexico--from all parts of Mexico--Oaxaca, from Puebla, from Tijuana, Columbians, people who are Columbian, Costa Rica, from Honduras. Yes, those are the people I have seen. I've seen Arabs, what are they called? Arabs.

CH: Arabs.

HC: Arab women and men who have car dealerships.

CH: And when you got this botánica, what were the things that you did to obtain this space? How was a person--how were you able to obtain this large locale without knowing how to speak English?

HC: This is not big! This is not big, I had a bigger one. I had five. This is nothing, this is small.

CH: Really, you had five botánicas like this, like this one?

HC: Yes, but I sold them and some of them were stolen from me.

CH: Here in the United States?

HC: Yes, the workers I hire take them; they're real sorcerers!

CH: So then, what was the process that you had to pass to obtain a botánica?

HC: I worked on the corner [doing construction]; I worked hard, I waited on the corner of Sawtelle and Pico and—

CH: But how did you learn the business? How did you learn--

HC: No, I was involved in a lot of businesses in Guatemala.

CH: Yes, I recall you telling me about the bar (barroteria) and all.

HC: Necessity drives you to work and since you come to this country to work and not steal or nothing. Here you have to work. You get opportunities in this country. If people don't take them they're dumb.

CH: Did you have to take out a loan to have money?

HC: No, I've never (inaudible)

CH: So then, you just began by renting this locale?

HC: No, I worked at a corner and I worked all types of work; I worked in anything, and I was paid well. Then I left there and transferred to a company called DJ, it was called DJ.

CH: DJ

HC: It was a very big construction company for Santa Monica and then since i worked with other people the boss fired me, but he paid me $20 an hour. Then I got work with some Greeks moving antique things and they paid me like $22 an hour and I went on saving money. Yes, saving money, saving money.

CH: Saving.

HC: But, but for the rent I only got $1000 and later with $1000 I did all this.

CH: But how--

HC: I got this saving money.

CH: Okay so with your savings you were able to—

HC: Look, I had like $500 and I asked, “will you give me the locale and when I have money I will pay you,” because I knew I was okay because San Simon had told me so. All was good. So then, I started working without money and only a box of seven-day candles (veladoras), twelve candles, like five prayers and a table like those wood ones.

CH: And that was over there?

HC: There. People used to ask me, they used to ask me if it was gonna be a bar (cantina).

CH: Okay

HC: I didn’t even have chairs or anything.

CH: And when—and after that—

HC: I found a table and that chair that I’ve had for many years on the street.

CH: This one that you keep?

HC: Yes, and I changed the table last year, but it didn’t have a leg or anything, it only had three legs.

CH: And you had to buy—

HC: I’ve bought this little saint a long time ago.

CH: A long time, you’ve had it for a long time.

HC: The thieves that have entered have robbed and they broke his hand, but he’s still here.

CH: They don’t take him from you.

HC: No.

CH: And did you have to have a license to have this business?

HC: Yes, yes, without license they wouldn’t let me.

CH: So, how was it that you got a license?

HC: When I first arrived, like in the first three years, I worked at the corner and then I went to Stockton and then I went to san Francisco and I worked in the fields picking

potatoes, onions, everything, asparagus. In the fields, cutting grapes, cutting everything. So then I applied for permission while there.

CH: There. Oh! So, while you were in the fields you applied for permission?

HC: Yes, I applied for permission and in three years I had a permit.

CH: You had a permit to stay in the United States or for work?

HC: Yes, for work. And with that permit I later came back here. I left to Guatemala from there (the fields) and when I came back from Guatemala I went back to the corner. When I went back to the corner I got money and came back to starting work.

CH: But you did not need to have a license for the business?

HC: I don't know, yes. In the 3501 I started paying for the license about two or three years ago. But when I worked in the apartment I did not pay for a license because I didn't know how that was. And then they told me I had to have a license for taxes, a license for the locale in city hall. I have, I have two licenses.

CH: And did you go alone?

HC: No, they told me that it was dangerous, not to show up at immigration because that permit was good for nothing and that—

CH: it was dangerous for you to go to immigration?

HC: Yes, they told me not to go, not to go. I got someone to get me a license and I would give him my taxes and she never paid yearly and I found out that they went and closed my store and I asked why? "Because you haven't paid taxes," [they said.] But he has paid them, he has paid them. And they said that he had never gone to pay. So, I fired that person and then they told me, "you can have the business in your name."

CH: Okay.

HC: And then I had it in my name.

CH: And so in that time you put the business in your name?

HC: Yes, but three years had already passed.

CH: Did anyone help you sign the necessary papers?

HC: Nobody, one just goes to city hall—

CH: And they spoke in Spanish and all?

HC: No, but I said something in chopped up words and asked for a permit and said something about business and any word that one learns.

CH: And that's how it was? That's how—

HC: Yes, until now that's how I handle paper work.

CH: The hard way, you did it the hard way!

HC: Yes, yes, always, they understand me and I understand them, yes, yes.

CH: And so that's how you got everything in your name and started to work with your license and everything, without knowing how to read or anything?

HC: Yes. I don't know how to read?

CH: So, have there been people who have helped you read things or who come to let you know how to do some things to do with the business, like if the laws change or something? Does anyone come and let you know of changes?

HC: No (inaudible)

CH: So then you have to learn everything—

HC: I have to do it. Every year I know that I have to pay my license on the first day of the year. On the first day I go and pay my license and that's that. And the business taxes are paid every four months, every month.

CH: Okay, okay. And so you—

HC: Sometimes I'm late because I don't have enough money, but I go and pay in five months.

CH: So, you're always up to date with what you have to do?

HC: Yes, pay my taxes, pay my taxes of the store and the business. And keep the store somewhat clean because it can't be too clean because the locale does not allow it.

CH: Okay, okay. So, basically we're talking about the botánica and how he obtained the business and how he went and got licenses and he just kind of winged it, you know, and what ever words, what ever mimes, they would understand or he would understand of them and got everything signed and that's how he started it. Did you have any questions regarding how he got the botánica in operation?

MOJ: No, just what ever was on the list.

CH: And you had businesses in Guatemala, the bars and all that?

HC: Yes, when I was 16, 17 years until 20 years.

CH: So, you're pretty used to having businesses?

HC: Yes (laughs).

CH: And—I remember you having told me—

HC: There, in Guatemala, I sold in the markets, where ever, the street. That's how we have made our living.

CH: Doing everything.

HC: What its about is not sleeping, not sleeping and keeping busy because you are bound to sell something.

CH: When you worked in Stockton was it for three years? Or—

HC: Yes, for three years.

CH: You lived there for three years. And was it during the time that you were here--

HC: Like three or two years, I don't remember, but yes.

CH: Okay. Was it when you lived in Exposition and Ruth Helen? When you lived on Exposition and Ruth Helen?

HC: Yes, that's where because my woman came and stayed there and I left.

CH: You left to Stockton to work.

HC: I went to work there because there was nothing here.

CH: Three years or three months?

HC: Like three years.

CH: Like three years.

HC: Yes, because in that time we separated. First I went for three months and then I left all together because we separated.

CH: Ah, so first you left for three months, then you came back and then you separated and then you went back and stayed there for three years.

HC: Yes, because there we were tricked by being told that we were going on plane to a place called Las Vegas--we didn't know where Las Vegas—and that they would pay us $15 and they took all the money we had made in one month. Some people. And at last minute they dropped us off on the freeway, we were like twenty! (laughs)

CH: There in Stockton? They left you in Stockton? You thought you were going to Las Vegas?

HC: They told us that in Las Vegas there was a lot of work, lots of money and everything.

CH: But, in reality they took you to Stockton?

HC: They robbed us and hurt one of my cousins and dumped him on the freeway (laughs).

CH: And in reality they left you in another place where--

HC: --They left us without food and in the street because (inaudible). Yes.

CH: And so that's where you stayed for three years?

HC: It was a white boy. A white boy said that he had some airplane and all this stuff!

CH: What an adventure, right.

HC: And since one is desperate for work, right?

CH: What an adventure. And so, you did you work in different fields there or in one field only?

HC: In all of them! In the pear, the apple, in the squash, the little onion, the radish and everything!

CH: You cultivated everything then.

HC: In the cherry, peach, the orange, in everything, I know it all. No one can tell me (inaudible), nothing, I know it all.

CH: But did you already know how do to it?

HC: No. Nobody knows. That's how—one has to go and learn because necessity makes you work and move forward because people who do not struggle to work becomes a

thief, but not me. I want to work and want to work and want what's mine. I don't want what they give or anything. I've never asked for welfare, I've never asked for anything. All I ask the whites at immigration is the opportunity to be here, not selling drugs or anything, just working legally, and so it is.

CH: Very good. And it was in Stockton where you had the experience of working with all those vegetables.

HC: Yes.

CH: Okay. And in all that time you were saving your money. In all of that time working and in all your experience working at the corner and all that you saved and saved to have that business and later this business?

HC: But it was with a little bit, I started with $500 with rent.

CH: And the place that you have on Venice blvd.; the botánica that you have?

HC: It's not mine anymore; they stole it from me.

CH: they stole it from you?

HC: A person who used to work with me stole it.

CH: And the other five locales that you used to have?

HC: I closed some and others were stolen from me because I didn't have papers.

CH: What were the names of those places?

HC: Ah, the one up there on Magnolia is Centro Espiritual San Simon.

CH: Santo Espiritual?

HC: Centro

CH: Oh, Centro Espiritual.

HC: Yes, and –

CH: So is the Centro Espiritual San Simon in Santa Monica?

HC: No, not in Santa Monica. Here, it was here.

CH: Here, here.

HC: On Pico and Magnolia

CH: Pico and Magnolia. Okay, so you had Centro Espiritual San Simon here on Pico and Magnolia; up here.

HC: Yes.

CH: And you had another, did you say in Santa Monica?

HC: Yes

CH: In the city of Santa Monica or here on Santa Monica Street.

HC: I had the one on Santa Monica Street for a short time.

CH: Did it have the same name?

HC: No, it had a different name.

CH: What was it called?

HC: San Simon.

CH: San Simon. Have all the botánicas that you've had been called San Simon?

HC: All of them.

CH: What about the one on Venice? The one that you're selling?

HC: That one is called Botánica San Simon de los Llanos.

CH: Ok.

HC: They have named it Indio de Samayac, but it's not.

CH: They've named it Indio de Samayac, but you are not there anymore and you are –

HC: I'm gonna sue them, but later.

MOJ: Do you know why he wanted to establish a botánica?

CH: Why did you want to have a botánica?

HC: Don't know.

CH: What made you want to establish a botanica?

HC: I don't even know where the idea was born. Before I knew it I had it. God and San Simon gave it to me. Yes, because to have a business here is hard.

CH: You could have, well since you had extensive experience dealing with businesses in Guatemala you could have had any other type of business, but –

HC: Oh, no, I have big plans to do a lot of things in life, but this country doesn't give you the opportunity. I could (inaudible) the building in front. Yes, I can do it. I can (desambular ?) do many things, but they don't give you the opportunity. The path is always closed. Let's say you go get a car, you can, if you work, you can get a Mercedes but since they see you are Latino they don't give it to you.

CH: So, was it easier for you to have a botánica?

HC: No. I can have any business. Any business is fine with me. I can sell clothes, I can sell food, I can sell anything, I know all will go well for me.

CH: But, then, then, why, why?--

HC: I don't know, before I knew it I was in this, I don't know. Because I've worked with everything else over there [referring to Guatemala]. Look, once I went to buy a truck on Figueroa and, what do they call it, Los Feliz, it's a fancy dealership. But, there they have like 20-25 salespeople and they had a, a, what do they call it, suburban, fixed up, the ones with leather all inside.

CH: Yes, yes, very pretty.

HC: With a path in the middle and all.

CH: Yes, nice.

HC: With television and all.

CH: Oh, with television and all, suburban ooh! Fancy.

HC: Yes, I liked it. Yes, with everything, with computer and all. And so we went in and they looked at us all strange. No one came near us! There were whites, there were Chinese, there were blacks and all kinds of people. And the truck was open and circling around so all could see it and I said, "I will take this truck, today! I'm taking it today in one hour." And I had the idea that that truck, that thing was mine, it was mine! But, we went and gave $10,000 down payment and a Toyota runner.

CH: Toyota what?

HC: Toyota runner
CH: Toyota.

HC: Yes, and –

CH: Oh, you gave a car in exchange?

HC: Yes, because they wanted $40, 000 down payment! They were blocking your path in other words and they never helped us or anything. And we were in there and I told them if you still have that car I'm gonna take it and they said why are you gonna take it if you haven't made a deal. You're not gonna take it. And they left me there for like an hour. And then a man who was gonna interpret for me and I said, why don't they tend to us, why do they see us bad, why don't they want to help us? They didn't help us. A Cuban man, I think he was his age, and he said, what can I help you with son? Can I help you son? Do you want something? Yes, I want to take this truck, [I said]. When everyone saw that he came and started the paper work everyone was excited! They spoke Spanish but didn't want to speak Spanish and the man said, I speak Spanish, I'll help you and we didn't give him that instead we gave him $40,000 down payment. In all it costs $76,000. I took it! But, what happens is if you go to a fancy dealership they don't want to help you.

CH: They discriminate.

HC: Yes, but I have the truck. Yes, (inaudible)

CH: So, you're almost done paying it off.

HC: Yes, almost, almost. I only like a year left.

CH: Nice

HC: Yes. If they gave you more opportunities here, but they don't.

CH: You could do more if you had more opportunities.

HC: I have it at home because it's hard taking it out, but—

CH: And how did you manage to get your house?

HC: I have many things that I buy, gold, necklaces, bracelets and things like that and I have this much in gold and I used to owe them money because house vendors had ripped me off by $6,000. Ay, I said, I don't want anything else, that's it. Because they used to say that they were looking for a house for me and looking for a house for me and they never found me a house.

CH: And you were paying.

HC: Yes, that day, I said, no more, that's it. Any deals that are not done let them get lost, I don't want anything. Then we were going down that street and there it said 21 [century realty] and we asked and they sold me the house.

CH: You called?

HC: No, I went there right then and a lady, who was from a church or Evangelical religion, and she helped me and she said you can have that house.

CH: You just told her I want to buy that house?

HC: Yes.

CH: was it expensive?

HC: $195, 000

CH: You had to get a loan then.

HC: Yes, we took out a crazy loan.

CH: Yes, because that's the only way—

HC: Yes, but she helped us with some money too.

CH: Ok.

HC: Yes, but I pawned my jewelry and things.

CH: You pawned your jewelry to have a down payment?

HC: Yes, because I didn't have money.

CH: Nice. And you've had your house since then.

HC: Yes, I've had my house for three years.

CH: It's pretty.

HC: Right now I gave it a second level.

CH: Oh, really. Nice, Carlos.

HC: Yes, we finished it day before yesterday.

CH: Nice! It wasn't there last time I was there, was it?

HC: No. Yes, thank God.

CH: I was very impressed by your garden.

HC: Right now, right now we gave it a second floor and a balcony facing the street.

CH: Nice, nice, you'll see the city a little better.

HC: It looks even smaller from up high!

CH: Ok. So the five businesses, the other five businesses, the botánicas—

HC: No, those haven't resulted in anything, they steal from me, they steal them.

CH: Why?--

HC: I'm not there; it's better to have one business only. My sons go to school; they don't help me.

CH: Do you know who the owners of Centro San Simon that's on Pico and Magnolia?

HC: It was my worker Tony and Luis Aleta.

CH: Tony was your worker?

HC: Tony was my client and then he stayed to mop; he was a homosexual, and we gave him work. Later he ended up buying cards from Walter Mercado. Then he stole books from the store and before we knew it he was reading cards.

CH: He worked for you there?

HC: Cleaning. Here. In my house, here, here. There was no other business. Then I opened the business and he went there because I could not stand him, he was unbearable. Next thing you know he said he was the owner. He took it.

CH: He took it—

HC: Yes, he falsified signatures and took the business.

CH: How is that? How can they take your business?

HC: I don't know. Afterwards they told me not to even come near.

CH: Wasn't the place under your name?

HC: Yes, but who knows who signed it to him and it's in his name. And then they sent thieves and people to beat me up,yes.

CH: So, he's the new owner.

HC: Right now it's Tony, but first it was Luis Aleta. Luis Aleta is a good guy. Tony was Luis' employee and mine, but—

CH: And now Tony is the only owner.

HC: Yes, he took Luis out of there too. And the one up here also stole from us.

CH: Which one that's up here?

HC: The one from Venice

CH: Venice, Venice. Oh! The one on Venice was stolen.

HC: They stole our botánica

CH: And that one was also under your name?

HC: Yes.

CH: It's strange, I don't understand how they can do that.

HC: Because we have, there haven't been people to care for them so we've offered them up, we've sold them and after they give us half of the money they don't pay us the rest.

CH: Oh, so you sold the place and they only gave you have—

HC: What? Did they call me?

CH: You sell the merchandize?

HC: I sell the merchandize, but what I want is my name

CH: So when you try to sell the botánica, you sell the merchandize and it's in that time that the person tries to buy, maybe they only pay you part of the money and afterwards they owe you—

HC: They end up owing me $10,000-15,000 and they don't pay.

CH: Ah, so that's how they steal your business from you.

HC: That's the way.

CH: Ok. I just wanted to understand exactly how they had done that to you.

HC: I will leave you because I have some people and I haven't worked today.

CH: okay. He wants to cut here because he's got some people and he hasn't really had any clients—